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OSLO FOR HELENA SCHRADER
DOE FOR GPERSON, CAROLYN GAY
TREASURY FOR ASEVERENS, SRENENDER, DFIELDS
COMMERCE FOR KBURRESS
STATE PASS USTR FOR ASST USTR FLISER
STATE PASS TRANSPORTATION FOR MARAD
STATE PASS OPIC FOR ZHAN AND MSTUCKART
STATE PASS TDA FOR NCABOT
STATE PASS EXIM FOR JRICHTER
STATE PASS USAID FOR GWEYNAND AND SLAWAETZ

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/06/2018

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SUBJECT: NIGER DELTA SPOT REPORT: MILITANTS KILL MILITARY
FORCES IN BAYELSA, MEND CLAIMS RESPONSIBILITY

Classified By: Consul General Donna Blair for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

11. (SBU) In the early morning of February 3, militants attacked a military houseboat stationed near a Shell facility in Nembe Creek, Bayelsa, killing Nigerian navy personnel, according to local papers. Jomo Gbomo, reportedly a spokesman for the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) issued a press statement claiming responsibility for the attack. The "minor attack is to commemorate the fifth month" of the incarceration of Henry Okah, whom the article refers to as a "peace and environmental activist." (Note: Okah, who is incarcerated in Angola, is the nominal leader of the loose organization known as MEND. End Note.) According to press reports, hundreds of troops have been deployed to Nembe Creek following this incident.

12. (C) According to Dimieari Von Kemedi, Director of the Bayelsa State Due Process office, this attack came at a time when many people thought the state's crisis would be resolved; instead of departing the area, the military is now increasing its presence. Kemedi told Poloff on February 5 most militants in Bayelsa have accepted a peace deal with the state. Despite the peace deal, some individuals may have come under pressure to carry out the attack on behalf of Okah, Kemedi suggested. He commented it is unfortunate this single incident could create panic in the state.

13. (C) However, Chevron and OSAC representatives told RSO they did not believe this incident was perpetrated by "MEND." Rather, they suggested "Jomo Gbomo" took advantage of a pirate/armed robbery attack which coincidentally aligned with Okah's fifth month in jail. (Note: No explanation was provided for this line of reasoning. End Note.)

14. (SBU) Comment: Bayelsa enjoyed a short respite from

militant attacks since the end of last year, although it remains to be seen whether those responsible for perpetrating this attack can be drawn back to the negotiating table. We note that MEND is not a single or unified organization and that there are a number of militant freelancers in the region with their own political and financial agendas. End Comment.

15. (U) This cable has been cleared by Embassy Abuja.
BLAIR